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BOOK REVIEWS

THE PRIVATE COUNSELLOR. By A Medical Practitioner. The Educational Press, 36, Chancery Lane.

THE author has set himself an idealistic task. Stimulated by an extract from the Report of the Committee of the Royal Commission on Venereal Diseases that "Young people are not and cannot be kept in ignorance ; it is better that knowledge should first come to them from pure and not tainted sources. The silence of the past is responsible for much of the evil of the present," the author desires to place in the hands of young men—and also of those of more advanced years—a book dealing with the more common diseases and derangements of the male generative organs. "That the book will be the means of keeping many out of the paths of danger and disaster is his earnest hope."

There can be no doubt that sex instruction is given best by word of mouth, and not in book form. The spirit of honesty, the open countenance, the expression of noble and lofty sex sentiments, be it by parent, pedagogue or priest, must stir a chord of chivalry in young people . . . they can then confide to the mentor, as they so often do nowadays, and most of the difficulty is over. But from a book all sorts of passages can be selected out and misconstrued, and a pornographic interpretation set upon them. There is also another evil engendered by books of this nature in the shape of that destructive malady—Fear. Even we medical men, acquainted with the signs and symptoms of venereal disease, are inclined to exaggerate our slightest symptom ; how much the more so does this obtain with the ignorant layman ? The description of syphilis and gonorrhœa, however detailed and accurate, can never allay suspicion, but only help to accentuate fear in a young adult when he notes an occasional spot on his own body (probably acne), or a morning discharge due to a nocturnal emission. This book, then, has the deficiencies of its class but its own merits. It gives a good and interesting general account of the anatomy and physiology of the male sexual organs, and although not always accurate, it is made quite interesting. It contains a series of chapters on seminal losses, sexual excesses, sexual neurasthenia, spermatorrhœa, etc. A highly commendable chapter on the danger of "coitus interruptus" is unfortunately followed by a biased and harmful discussion of masturbation. So condemnatory is the author of this practice, and so vivid are his quotations of the harm resulting from this habit, that we can imagine the poor unfortunate masturbator closing the book at this chapter with nothing but visions of impending disaster in his mind. To state that locomotor ataxia developed in a case of excessive masturbation, and to suggest that it did so because of this filthy habit, is to engender a Fear which might alter the whole course of an adolescent's life.

We believe that if a few black-and-white diagrams had been sub-

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stituted for the series of pink plates, the work would have gained in value.

Save for these inadequacies, the general spirit and principle of this book is excellent ; and we admire especially the final chapter entitled " Marriage," where the author bids the sufferer from " sexual complaints " to consult his doctor before entertaining the hope of marriage ; and warns the sufferer from the " venereal complaints " how careful he must be to make assurance doubly sure in relation to his cure.

L. K.

THE COMMON DISEASES OF THE SKIN. By R. Cranston Low, M.D., F.R.C.P. Published by Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh.

THIS book is designed for the teaching of students, and is compiled from lectures given for that purpose. It in every way fulfils its function—being very clear and definite in the instruction it imparts. It is also, therefore, of use to the general practitioner, who is a busy man and wishes to know the concise, considered opinion of modern dermatologists. It is not, however, sufficiently discursive for the past graduate interested in dermatology particularly. The illustrations are excellent, many of them are taken from moulages, and faithfully reproduce the clinical conditions. It is a pity, however, that the author has not included a chapter on dermatological syphilis. In his preface he says he has left this subject to the specialist in venereal diseases, but as syphilis comes so much into dermatology it is a pity that he has not given us the benefit of his experiences.

The arrangement of the diseases is a little bit unusual. The first few sections are arranged according to their etiology, the later ones according to their physical characteristics. The text is in every way clear and dogmatic, which is essential in teaching unqualified students. In future editions perhaps the index might be a little more elaborate.

W. S. F.